

In 2020, Papua New Guinea made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, the National Council for Child and Family Services developed criteria for the appointment of child protection officers and appointed 42 child protection officers. However, children in Papua New Guinea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. Papua New Guinea's hazardous work prohibitions do not comply with international standards that require all children under age 18 to be protected from work that could jeopardize their health and safety, nor do its laws prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Schools continued charging fees as a result of not receiving promised government subsidies needed for education to remain free and accessible for all children. In addition, insufficient resources hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Papua New Guinea are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-4) Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining. (1,2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Papua New Guinea. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	Unavailable
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	Unavailable
Primary Completion Rate (%)		77.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (5)  
Data were unavailable from International Labor Organization's analysis, 2021. (6)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Working on tea, coffee, and palm oil plantations (1,2,7)
	Deep sea fishing, including harvesting sea cucumbers and pearls (2,8)
Industry	Mining, including gold mining (1,2)
	Manual labor (3)
Services	Domestic work (1,3)
	Street work, including scavenging for recyclables, begging, directing traffic, and directing traffic while begging (1-3)
	Working in markets, including unloading and carrying heavy bags of food (1,2)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, including working in bars, nightclubs, and brothels, and use in the production of pornography, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1-4)
	Forced domestic work (1,3)
	Illicit activities, including selling drugs (1,2,9)
	Forced mining, including panning for gold, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3)
	Forced portering, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (2,3)

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

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Some children from rural areas are sent to live with relatives or “host” families in cities, where they may be forced to perform domestic work to pay off family debts. (1,3) Children are commonly seen directing vehicle movements in and out of public parking spaces and directing traffic in busy urban business centers, especially during business hours. (8,10) Children also perform dangerous tasks in mining, such as handling dangerous chemicals, including mercury used in gold mining, for which they lack appropriate training and equipment. (2,8) While school enrollment increased as a result of the government's Tuition Fee-Free policy, access to education is hindered by the lack of funding and resources needed to support an increase in the number of students. (2)

While school enrollment increased as a result of the government's Tuition Fee-Free policy, access to education is hindered by the lack of funding and resources needed to support an increase in the number of students, and in practice, many schools charge fees for books, uniforms, and supplies. (1,2,7,11,12) The Tuition Fee-Free policy provides government subsidies to primary and secondary schools to cover the costs associated with accommodating additional children in school. However, in previous years, some schools had to close due to aging infrastructure and reportedly did not receive the subsidy. (1,13,14) Further, in 2019, schools in Morobe Province were allowed to start charging fees for students due to the Tuition Fee-Free policy not providing payment subsidies to schools. (1,14) Insufficient resources, including the lack of reliable water supplies and proper toilets, also contribute to poor school attendance and led to one school closing in 2020. (2) Lack of access to schools increases children's vulnerability to child labor. In addition, research found that the threat of gender-based violence prevents many girls from attending school. (15) Papua New Guinea lacks comprehensive research and data on child labor, which affects the government's ability to address child labor in the country. (1)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Papua New Guinea has ratified some key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Papua New Guinea's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the identification of hazardous occupations or activities prohibited for children and the prohibition of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	16	Article 103 of the Employment Act (16)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	No	16	Article 104 of the Employment Act (16)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	No		

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)**

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 23 and 43 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; Section 208 of the Criminal Code (17,18)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Section 208 of the Criminal Code (18)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 229J–229O and 229R–229S of the Criminal Code (19)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	16	Section 30 of the Defence Act (20)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	No		

\* No conscription (21)

According to the Employment Act, children ages 11 through 16 may be allowed to work under certain conditions, including parental consent and if the child works only with members of the family. The minimum age of 11 for light work is not in compliance with international standards, and the law does not specify the types of activities in which light work is permitted nor the number of hours per week that this work may be undertaken. (16,22) Papua New Guinea's Employment Act prohibits children under the age of 16 from engaging in hazardous work, which is not in compliance with international standards because it does not protect children between the ages of 16 and 18 from hazardous work. (16,22) Papua New Guinea also does not have laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. (23) The law does not sufficiently protect children from commercial sexual exploitation, because using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances are not criminally prohibited. (19) Lastly, the prohibitions against child trafficking are insufficient because they require that threats, the use of force, or coercion be established for the crime of child trafficking. (4,18)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	Implements and enforces child labor laws. (1)
Department of Youth, Religion, and Community Development	Through the Office of Child and Family Welfare Services, implements, oversees, and enforces the Child Protection ( <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> ) Act, including provisions on child labor and its worst forms, and employs Papua New Guinea's Child Protection Officers. (1,2,8,10,24,25)

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**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)**

Organization/Agency	Role
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary	Enforces laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children. (8) Includes the specialized Family and Sexual Violence unit, which includes protecting children's rights and safety. (1,8)
<i>I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain</i>	Telephone hotline funded by the Government of Papua New Guinea to report child welfare concerns and physical or sexual violence. (26)

Research indicates that the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations lacks a data monitoring system to track child labor cases, which may hamper its efforts to address child labor concerns in Papua New Guinea. (1,2) Although the government maintained the *I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain* hotline to report concerns related to child welfare and allegations of physical or sexual violence, it was not active in 2020. IOM also maintained a hotline that provided anti-trafficking information and resources, but the number of cases identified related to children is unknown. (1,26,27)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2020, labor law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including the number of labor inspectors conducting inspections.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (16)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (1)	Yes (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	No (1)	No (2)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information related to its labor law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. (2) While the number of labor inspectors is unknown, according to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Papua New Guinea would need to employ roughly 245 labor inspectors as its workforce consists of over 3.7 million workers. Although research indicates that labor inspectors sometimes carry out routine inspections in hazardous workplaces or in the manufacturing sector, due to limited personnel capacity, labor inspectors generally respond to specific child labor complaints on a case-by-case basis as complaints are filed. (1,2,28) Insufficient resources hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, including administrative and budgetary constraints that prevent officers from receiving sufficient training. (1,8,29) Based on estimates from previous years, the number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Papua New

Guinea's workforce, which includes approximately 3.68 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Papua New Guinea would employ about 245 labor inspectors. (21,30) Most child labor occurs in the informal sector and outside of cities—in suburban and rural areas—where inspections are seldom conducted. (1) When labor inspections do occur, they are conducted in all three of Papua New Guinea's languages (English, Hiri-Motu, and Pidgin/Tok Pisin). (2,31)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Papua New Guinea took actions to combat child labor (Table 7).

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2019	2020
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (1)	Unknown (2)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (1)	No (2)

The Government of Papua New Guinea did not respond to requests for information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for inclusion in this report. Research indicates that there are not enough officers to conduct criminal investigations into child labor accusations due to a lack of funding, training, and report writing skills. (1,2) Research was unable to find evidence of trainings occurring in 2020 and was unable to determine whether training for prospective law enforcement officials would include all child labor elimination components, including recognizing the worst forms of child labor, victim identification, and prevention strategies. (27,32)

## **IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR**

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee	Coordinates efforts to combat human trafficking. Chaired by the Department of Justice and the Attorney General, with representatives from more than 15 government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations. (1,32) NGOs were not invited to participate in meetings even though the committee comprises NGO stakeholders. (3,27,28,33) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to coordinate efforts to combat human trafficking during the reporting period. (2)
National Council for Child and Family Services	Coordinates the implementation of the Child Protection Act and the National Child Protection Policy. In partnership with UNICEF, is overseen by senior government officials, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, and private sector representatives, and comprises child protection officers. (1,34,35) During the reporting period, the Council developed criteria for the appointment of child protection officers and appointed 42 child protection officers. (2)
National Child Welfare Office	Coordinates the promotion of children's rights through awareness campaigns and trainings. Refers perpetrators to police and provides help to police and social services when a child is rescued from child labor. (28) During the reporting period, provided child protection services to three female minor victims. (4)

Research indicates that there is a lack of senior governmental leadership and participation at National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee meetings. (28,32)

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### V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including policy implementation.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea (2017–2020)	Promotes government coordination efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through more effective prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures and capacity building. (36,37) While research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea during the reporting period, the UN Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Justice initiated a periodic review of the National Action Plan. However, there were no substantial updates made. (2,4,33)
Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan (2015–2020)	Seeks to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders. (38) Research indicates that the government did not allocate any resources toward implementing this plan. (39) During the reporting period, the government commenced work on updating the plan, including an ongoing review process, though research was unable to determine what level of progress was made. (4,33)
National Child Protection Policy (2017–2027)	Seeks to strengthen child protection laws, including increased data gathering and analysis, full implementation of the <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> Act, and elimination of violence against children at the hands of the police. (1,40) Research was unable to determine whether efforts were undertaken to implement the National Child Protection Policy during the reporting period. (4)
Tuition Fee-Free Policy	Aims to improve access to education by abolishing school tuition fees and providing subsidies to cover costs for primary and secondary school children who cannot afford an education. (8,12,41) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement the Tuition Fee Free Policy during the reporting period. (4)

Research was unable to confirm whether the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor began enacting policies or programs in 2020—none were implemented in previous years due to a lack of effective administrative planning and human and financial resources. (2,10) Research was also unable to determine whether child labor elimination strategies were incorporated into the Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan.

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2020, the government funded and participated in programs that included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Child Care Centers†	Provide a safe location for children removed by Child Protection Officers from situations deemed to be harmful to their health and safety. (1,10,42) Research was unable to determine whether the Child Care Centers were active during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Papua New Guinea.

Research was unable to determine whether the government carried out programs specifically designed to assist children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, or mining. Research found no evidence of any programs with the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (3,32,43)

### VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Papua New Guinea (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict.	2018 – 2020
	Accede to the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.	2014 – 2020
	Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2014 – 2020
	Raise the minimum age for light work to age 13 to comply with international standards, and ensure that the law's light work provisions are sufficiently specific to prevent children from involvement in child labor.	2015 – 2020
	Establish age 18 as the minimum age for hazardous work, and identify hazardous occupations and activities prohibited for children.	2009 – 2020
	Ensure that the law does not require threats, the use of force, or coercion to be established for the crime of child trafficking.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, and offering a child for pornographic performances.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2020
Enforcement	Ensure that the law establishes a compulsory education age that is equal to the minimum age for employment.	2009 – 2020
	Fully fund and reopen the <i>I-Tok Kaunselin Helpim Lain</i> hotline.	2018 – 2020
	Publish information on child labor law enforcement efforts undertaken, including labor inspectorate funding, the number of child labor violations found, and the number of child labor penalties imposed.	2014 – 2020
	Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine or targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint-driven.	2014 – 2020
	Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to enforce labor laws and other laws that protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including funding, training, and report writing skills.	2009 – 2020
	Establish a referral mechanism between labor and criminal law enforcement authorities and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor receive appropriate support services.	2014 – 2020
	Ensure the number of labor inspectors meets the ILO's technical advice.	2017 – 2020
	Institutionalize and fully fund training for labor inspectors and criminal investigators on the worst forms of child labor, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment.	2016 – 2020
	Ensure that labor inspections occur in all areas of Papua New Guinea, especially outside of urban areas.	2019 – 2020
	Publish information on the criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.	2017 – 2020
	Establish a data monitoring system to track child labor cases.	2019 – 2020
	Ensure the number of labor inspectors in Papua New Guinea meets the ILO's technical guidance.	2020
	Coordination	Ensure that the established coordinating mechanisms to combat all forms of child labor, including the worst forms of child labor, fully carry out their mandates.
Ensure that there is senior governmental leadership and participation at the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee meetings.		2018 – 2020
Ensure that all anti-human trafficking stakeholders, including NGOs, are invited to and participate in the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee coordination meetings as per the Committee's mandate.		2019 – 2020
Government Policies	Ensure that all policies are funded and implemented according to their mandate, including the National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in Papua New Guinea, the Papua New Guinea Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan, the National Child Protection Policy, and the Tuition Fee Free Policy.	2017 – 2020
	Integrate child labor elimination strategies into the Trafficking in Persons National Action Plan.	2019 – 2020
	Fully reimburse schools for the added costs of accommodating additional students as mandated under the Tuition Fee-Free Policy.	2018 – 2020
Social Programs	Increase access to education by instituting programs to address gender-based violence against girls in schools, fully eliminating school-related fees, and increasing resources, including access to reliable water supplies and toilets.	2014 – 2020
	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2020
	Implement and fully fund programs and anti-human trafficking services that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant sectors, especially commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and mining.	2010 – 2020
	Ensure that Child Care Centers are active and are fully funded, and publish their activities undertaken during the reporting period.	2019 – 2020

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